

Excommunicatio Excommunicata.

OR, A

CENSURE

OF THE

Presbyterian Censures

And proceedings in the Classis at
MANCHESTER.

Wherein is modestly examined what
Ecclesiastical or civil ~~Function~~ ^{Authority} they pretend
for their new and usurped Power.

In a Discourse betwixt the Ministers of that
Classis, and some dissenting Christians.

LONDON,

Printed for Humphrey Moseley at the Sign of the
Prince's Arms in St. Pauls Church-yard.

1658.

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And proceedings in the
MAYOR'S COURT

Wherein is modestly examined
Ecclesiastical or civil jurisdiction
for their new and unbridled

In a Dialogue between the Mayor
Classe, and some divines

Printed for Humphrey Moseley at the Signe
Prince's Arms in St. Dunstons Church
1638



THE P R E F A C E.



IN such an age as this, when the heat of
vain and unprofitable controversies has
bred more scriblers, than a hot summer
(in the *Comedians* simile) does flies, it
might seem more rational, according
to *Solomons* rule, for prudent men to
keep silence, then to vex themselves and disquiet others
with such empty discourses, as rather enlarge then com-
pose the differences of Gods people. It was a sad age,
that of *Domitian*, of which the Historian affirmeth, that
then *Inertia pro sapientiâ erat*, Ignorance was the best
knowledge, laziness and servility was the best dili-
gence; and we could wish this age did not too much
resemble that: But when we see every *Marsyas* with
an old Pipe of *Minerva's*, dares contend with *Apollo*;
that men of low and cheap abilities, are too loud and
too hard for men of the choicest and best design, cer-
tainly *Inertia pro sapientia erit*, He's the best Orator that
dwells in silence, and he's the wisest man that keeps
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Plautus.

Tacitus.

The Preface.

Appion. the privacy and recluseness of his own ville. *Antibal* once told *Scipio*, that it had been better both for *Rome* and *Carthage*, if both of them had been contented with in their own bounds; and possibly it had been more honourable both for our brethren of the *Presbytery*, and our selves, had we made our lists more private, and plaid our prizes only behind the *Christians*. For we had confined and determined our ignorance to our own speare, and our defects had been visible to no eyes but our own. But as *Antalcidas* objected to *Agelilaus*, The *Spartans* have made the *Thebanes* fight whether they would or no; the exasperations and bitterness of our brethren, have lent cowards courage, and provok'd us to combate whether we would or no; *Miserum est pati nec licere queri*; 'Tis a hard case to be hurt, and to have our mouths stopt; to suffer, and to be obliged not to complain; *Qui unam patitur injuriam invitatur aliam*; 'Tis a certain rule with the men of this perswasion. If you take a blow from them on one cheek, you cannot be *Christians* in their *Calender* unless you turn the other also. We had well hoped, that what *Tully* notes to be the eloquence of *Atticus*, *Respondere sciat me sibi dum taceo*, our silence and our patience might have been good Orators for us to have answered the pretensions of their power, the disguises of their popular discourses; and the harsh proceedings towards us, but the more we suffered, they triumphed the more; and because it was our judgement and choice to dwell in silence; they thought we either could not or durst not speak. But *nemo nobis amicis uti potest & Adulatoribus*. They shall find we are their friends, but not their Parasites; we will speak that truth which we understand

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stand, beseech the good spirit to lead them and us into all truth; and in this mean and inconsiderable service, we appeal to the good witnesses within us, that we speak nothing out of pride or envy, or with unchristian reflections upon our sufferings; but with a hearty desire of peace, that they or we may be convinc'd, and at last meet by a unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

We shall not present the Rooms and model of the whole house in the Poreh, yet we shall preface a recital of those grievances, which made us open our mouths in this discourse, *Ne extorqueretur nobis causa Enai Cottæ patrocini*, lest we might seem to fear the Giant of Presbytery, and to think it were onely that *Palladium* that would preserve the City of God.

About 7 months since, the Classis of Manchester publisht their Breviats or censures, against all that came not into them for trial and examination, wherein they go to the high waies, and compel all to come in and give submission to their Government, by subjecting themselves to examination by the Ministers and Elders, not onely such as may be suspected to be ignorant or scandalous, but all, of all elevations, of all judgments, must come under the Inquisition, not so much we fear to fit them for the Sacrament, as to teach them obedience, that they may know themselves, as *Tiberius* said of the Senate, that they are *homines ad servitutem nati*, to owe an obedience to their new Masters, which they must pay under the grand penalties of suspension and excommunication. *Tacitus.*

In answer to these, *Bruta fulmina*, we with all meekness and humility sent them one single sheet of paper, desiring satisfaction in some things wherein our reason

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and religion obliged us to be of a different judgement from them; This one sheet they return'd in seven, an answer long enough, if it be sound enough.

To satisfie us in our scruples, and in their proceedings, they pretend for what they do, both an Ecclesiastical and civil sanction, a Commission from Christ and the State also: But that maxime of the ancient will here be found true *Ἄνευ πάσης ἀνθρώπου βουλῆς*, Our own Lawes built upon passion and interest, are commonly lawlesse; It is apparent to us, that their new Lights have no light from Antiquity or primitive forms; that their new Rules have no establishment, either by the Lawes of the Christian Church, or the Lawes of this Land. St. Jerom said of Origen, That *ingenii sui administrationa putat ecclesie esse Sacramenta*, an imagination sure of our Presbyters, that the *placita* of their own wills must pass for civil and divine constitutions. We wonder that men pretending to Learning and Religion, should not onely call in the Lord of truth to abett the phansies of men, but should also pretend to encouragement and Commissions from the State to second their prevarications.

It hath pleased his Highness in his wisdom and clemency, to secure all godly and peaceable men professing Jesus Christ, from those Ordinances which the rigour of Presbytery had mounted against them; but where he gives the least incouragement for this power usurped by them, we find not, and therefore we think 'tis friendly advice, that they take heed lest their unguided zeal or interest precipitate them into a premunire, since under colour of Authority, they have made Lawes and Canons, and published them openly in the Church for
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all to obey upon pain of excommunication, not onely against all the ancient known Lawes of elder date, but also contrary to the present establishment and the Magistracie under which we now live.

'Tis a trouble to us, to hear them cry out against Prelacy and Episcopacy, as onely an artificial and political device to Lord it over Gods inheritance, whereas indeed their little fingers are heavier then the Prelates loins; though they tell us their way is a friendly, meek, and social way, we find it not; they make us onely as Publicans and Heathens; it should seem that all that they intended in the change of Church-Government, was onely to slice the Diocesan into Parochiall Bishops; and with him in *Lucian*, To cut out the old useless Moons into fine new Stars, every one of which claim the same influence and dominion over the people which the Prelates did.

'Tis a trouble to us, to hear them inveigh against Hereticks, and Schismaticks, against the Novatian and Donatists of old; when they walk in their steps, maintaine their principles, and espouse their quarrels. We are told by the Church Historians, That the doctrine against mixt-communication, was a brat begotten by *Novatus*, nursed up by *Lucifer* and *Audius*, but it grew not till *Donatus* became its foster-Father, then indeed it flourisht and spread amain; till St. *Austin* by his judicious and clear opposition did banish it, that, and the subsequent Ages; the Anabaptists of the last age called it back into *Germany*, *Quod aruit in se resloruit in illis*; they grafted upon the old stock, and wanted nothing of the *Donatists* but to be called so. Now amongst other of their dangerous and

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erroneous principles, Bullinger notes this for one of the chief, *De doctrina cana scrupulosa querunt Anabaptistae, quorum causa cana dominica sit instituta.* They were nice and scrupulous, and inquisitive, concerning the Lords Supper, concluding it was only to be given to the Saints, and concluding the Saints to their own folds.

This is the direct practise of the Scottish and English Presbytery; because the Parliament formerly, and now his Highness, in their wisdom and prudence have so blunted the edge of their secular power, that they cannot hurt us with that, they fly to their religious shifts, and what *David* said of *Goliath's* sword, surely they say of the holy Sacrament, *There's none like unto that*; no engine so likely to teach us obedience, and to give them the sovereignty as that. They impale the supper of Christ to their own inclosures, and as absolute Judges of all communicants, keep back all persons that have not their Shiboleth ready, that will not fall down and worship that Idol which they have set up. The *Egyptians* were hard Taskmasters, to expect the children of Israel should make Bricks, and make straw too, to require the same number of bricks without materials to make them of: this is something like the severity of our new Masters, they censure for not doing that which they render to us impossible: If we come not to the Lords Supper, we must be excommunicate; and they will not permit us to come, because we are ignorant, or scandalous, or prophane; and 'tis proof enough we are so, because we are too stout to fall down and worship their imaginations.

'Tis a trouble to us, that men who impropriate to themselves the name of Saints, and would have the world

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to think them the onely Christians, should be so far from that *ἐπιείκεια εὐαγγελίας*, that meekness and sweetness of the Gospel, that they are still of the old legall spirit, to eradicate and destroy all that are not of their way: Instead of sweetning and indearing the spirits of men, that they may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved, they irritate and imbitter them by their two bold judging in private, and by their fierce and severe censures in publick, as if indeed it were their work to deliver them up unto Satan.

These things have forc'd us contrary to our own dispositions and inclinations, to appear in publick, not onely for our own vindication, but in defence of Ecclesiastical and civil constitutions, well hoping that these mean indeavours will encourage some worthy and learned Champions to take up Arms for the defence of that cause which we love: what we have done, *quale quale sit*, what ever it be, inasmuch as in the sincerity of our hearts we profess 'tis done, *sine ullo studio contentionis*, without any pleasure or delight in contention, but onely for the love of truth, we hope our good God will give it a more gracious success, and good men will give it a more charitable reception.

Errata sic Corrigenda.

PAge 81. line 25. for whereas, read whereat. p.82 l. 2 these,
r. those. p. 83 l. 10 Answer as it is to, r. Answer it is to be.
ibid. l. 16 pray, r. pay. p.84 l. 32 See, r. So. p.85 l. unanimous,
r. unanimous. p.87 l. 24 referring, r. restoring. p. 88 l. 13. ex-
amination, r. excommunication. In the Preface, p. 3. l. 30. for
I, r. In.



At the first Classe at Manchester
Septem. 8th 1657.

IN pursuance of an Order of the last Provincial, the first Classe doth humbly represent to this Assembly their apprehensions in the case to them propounded in a draught prepared for the severall Congregations belonging to their own Association, if it shall be approved of by this Assembly, and which they do wholly submit to their Judgments.

It being represented to this Classe, and much complained of, and offence being taken, That in the severall Congregations, (if not all) belonging to the Association, there are many persons of all sorts, that are members of Congregations, and publickly enjoy severall priviledges; as, the hearing of the Word, prayers of the Church, and baptizing of their children; and satisfaction for injuries done unto them, That yet live in a total and sinfull neglect of the Lords Supper, that are scandalous and offensive in their lives, drunkards, unclean persons, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, neglecters of Family-duties, that will not subject themselves to the present government of the Church, but live as lawless persons, out of their rank and order, and there are sundry that are grossly ignorant in the main points of Christian Religion. These are to give notice, that this Classe, lay-

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ing these things to heart, and much grieved for them, do publish and make known;

1. That every Minister belonging to this Association, shall set apart one or two dayes, or more of the week dayes, in every moneth, for the catechizing of the severall families belonging to their respective Congregations; and for the information of the ignorant in those families, and that the families to be catechized on each of such dayes, set apart for that purpose, have notice the Lords day before, to meet the Ministers either at the Church or Chappel, or the Ministers house, or some other house within the Congregation, that may be convenient for the neighboring families to meet at, that shall be appointed for such a day, as may be judged meetest by the severall Ministers.

2. That notice shall be taken of all persons that forsake the publick Assemblies of the Saints, and constantly turn their backs of the Sacrament of the Lords Supper.

3. That like notice shall be taken of all scandalous persons.

4. That they shall be privately admonished, according to the order prescribed by Christ, *Mat. 18.* once or twice, to see if they will reform; and that the Minister, when hee catechizeth the severall families, shall exhort such persons in them as hee findes to be of a competent knowledg, and are blamelesse in life, that they present themselves to the Eldership, that they may be admitted to the Lords Supper.

5. That if they will neither hearken to private admonition, nor admonition of the Eldership, their names shall be published openly in the severall Congregations, and they warned before all to reform.

6. That if after all this they shall continue obstinate, they shall be cast out, and excommunicated.

These things this Classe thought fit to give publick notice of, being very sensible, that, for the want of the vigorous exercise of Church discipline, ignorance, Atheism, and licentiousnesse grows upon us, to the great dishonor of God, scandal of Religion, the hazzard and undoing of many pretious souls, and the laying

laying a blot on several Congregations ; and therefore they are resolved, (seeing themselves necessitated, to this severity of discipline, for the freeing themselves from the great guilt of neglect of their own duty, that otherwise they shall be under) to make use of that power that Christ hath committed to them, for edification, and not for destruction ; although it would be their far greater joy, that there might not be occasion of using sharpnesse : and therefore they do earnestly in the bowels of Jesus Christ beseech all those that are ignorant, that they would apply themselves diligently to the use of all publick and private means for their information, submitting themselves with all readinesse to be instructed ; and to consider, that without knowledge the minde cannot be good : and they do also in the name of Jesus Christ, exhort and warn all such as live scandalously, and in the practice of open sins, that they break off their iniquities by repentance, and turn unto God speedily with their whole heart, that they neither incur the censure of being cast out of the Church here, nor by continuing in their sinful course, be kept for ever entering into the kingdome of Heaven hereafter.

And touching such as turn their backs of the Lords Supper constantly, this Classe doth wish them seriously, to consider what an account they will be able to give unto Jesus Christ, for their living in the dayly neglect of an ordinance that is so exceeding necessary for their own comfort and growth in grace ; and that they would lay aside all prejudice, whatever it is that hinders, and submit themselves unto wholesom doctrine, for their own good, as this Classe hath been ready on their part to expresse all tendernesse toward the weak, and a willingnesse to condescend to the meanest, for the removing all occasions of stumbling, so far as lies in their power. And yet, considering the fearfull danger that all such do lay themselves open unto, that shall eat and drink the Body and Blood of the Lord unworthily, they do warn whosoever comes to the Lords Table, to take special care so often as they come, to examine themselves, lest they eat and drink their own damnation.

But because the exercise of Church discipline must begin at private persons, and that if they neglect their duty of watching

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over, and admonishing one another, and bringing complaints to the Eldership as there is occasion, little or nothing can be done for the thorow reformation of the several Congregations; this Classe doth therefore warn all and every of the members belonging unto them, to consider the great guilt they will lye under, if they through their neglect, obstruct so needfull and necessary a work, and doth expect therefore in all faithfulness, laying aside all partiality, slavishness, and self-respects, they should address themselves to the discharge of their duties; that if any walk disorderly, and will not be reclaimed by private admonition, they making complaint thereof to the Eldership, course may be taken for excommunicating of the obstinate, and thereby purging out the old leaven, to the glory of God, the delivering their own souls from that guilt they will otherwise lye under, the preserving the Ordinances from prophanation, and the rest of the lump from being leavened, the stopping of the mouthes of such as seek occasion against us, and finally the everlasting welfare and salvation of the souls of those that go astray.

*By the Provincial Assembly
at Preston, Octob. 6.
1657.*

RICHARD HEYRICKE
Moderator *pro tempore*.

This Presentation is approved by the Provincial Assembly,

THOMAS JOHNSON, Moderator.

EDWARD GEE, Scribe.

To



To the Eldership of the severall congregations belonging to the Association of the First Classe at Manchester, within the Province of Lancaster; These.

Give us leave to salute you, in your own Terms.

VVE have seen and seriously weighed that paper draught, intituled *A presentation of the first Classe at Manchester*, dated the 8. of Sept. 1657. confirmed by the Provincial Assembly at *Preston*, Octob. 6. and published at *Manchester Church* the 22. of Nov. in the aforesaid year: and do publish this our sense, and Apprehension of it, as far as is plain to us, not resting in the Judgement and determination of any General Council contrary thereunto (if any such should be) much less to one of your Provincial Assemblies; Though you seem to submit to your Provincial, what you will hardly grant to a General Council: In which we dissent from you; Though in other things we shall joyn, as first.

1. We joyn with you, in a deep sense of the severall gross sins and errours of the times, desiring earnestly to mourn, first for our own, next for the sins of others of our Christian Brethren, and fellow members of that Church, whereof Christ is the Head: We are grieved together with you, for the Scandalous and offensive lives of such as live in drunkenness, uncleanness, swearing, prophanation of the Sabbath, &c.

2. We are also sensible with you, that there are sundry persons, grossely ignorant in the main points of Christian Religion.

3. You with us again (we hope) are sensible and grieved (though you do not at all mention them) for the gross errours
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in judgement, and the damnable Doctrine of many, who have rent themselves into as many severall heresies, as they have into Sects and Schismes.

Thus far we agree, nay more, touching the way of informing the ignorant, and reforming the wicked and erroneous, we shall not much dissent.

1. *And first for the information and instruction of the ignorant, by way of Catechizing, before they be admitted to the Sacrament;* The course by you published (provided it be in publique) little differeth from the order prescribed by the Church of England, and other reformed Churches abroad, before any be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lords supper.

2. *For those who erre so grossely, whether in Doctrinals, or points of discipline, thereby renting from a true constituted Church:* Though you speak nothing either of their sin or punishment, yet we hope, you with us do hold, That the Churches lawfull Pastors, have the power of the Keys committed to them, to excommunicate such offenders.

3. *For such as are scandalous and wicked in their lives;* Admonition, private and publique, is to be observed according to Christs rule *Mat. 18.* but if they still continue, and will not reform; the Churches lawfull Pastors have power to excommunicate such.

Thus far we accord in judgement, touching the way of informing the ignorant, and reforming wicked persons, and schismatical; which course is so fully warranted by the Word of God, and the constant practise of the Catholique Church, that we are not so wavering and unsettled in our apprehensions of the case, as to submit either it or them, either wholly or in part, to the contrary judgement and determination of a General Council of the Eastern or Western Churches; much less, to a new termed Provincial Assembly at *Preshon*, wherein we no little differ from you.

Other parts of your Paper are full of darkness, to which we cannot so fully assent, till further explicated and unfolded by you. For,

1. Whereas you say, *That in the severall congregations (if not in all) belonging to this Association, there are many persons of*
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all sorts that are members of congregations, &c. you seem to hint, that though your grief may be general (as ours) for all offenders, yet your censures extend onely to those who have admitted themselves members of some Congregation within your Association, and yet live inordinately, and will not be admonished: If so, then we who never were any members or associates of yours, are not within the verge and compass of your Presbyterian discipline; for what have you to do to judge those that are without?

2. But whereas your complaint, and offence taken, is, *That many there are of all sorts, who will not submit themselves to the present Government of the Church, but live like lawless persons out of their rank and order.*

If by the present Government of the Church, you mean your own (as may strongly be conjectured you do) then are we also comprehended therein, and must fall within your censure, and not onely we, but all Papists, Anabaptists, and all other, of what Profession, and Religion soever, who live within the Parish, must be taken for members of some one Congregation within your Association, and so driven into the common fold of Presbytery, and be subject to your Government: And this (as we suppose) is the chief design of you, in this, as in other transactions of yours, to subject all to your Government, which you garnish over with the specious title, of *Christs Government, Throne, and Scepter.* Presbytery is the main thing driven at here; and however she cometh sheltered in with a Godly pretence of sorrow, for the sins and ignorance of the times, and a duty incumbent upon you, to exercise the power which Christ hath committed to you, for edification, and not for destruction; yet these are but as so many waste papers wher in Presbyterie is wrapped, to make it look more handsomely, and pass more currently; but beware we must, for *lacet anguis in Herba.*

Object. But you say, *For want of the vigorous exercise of this Ecclesiastical discipline, ignorance, Atheism, and Licentiousness grows upon us, and men live as lawlesse persons, out of their rank and order, because not subject to your present Government.*

Sol. We pray for the establishment of such Church Government,

ment, throughout his Highness Dominions, as is consonant to the will of God, and Universall practice of primitive Churches, that Ecclesiasticall discipline may be exercised, in the hands of them, to whom it was committed by Christ, and left by him, to be transferred from hand to hand to the end of the World; and shall readily joyn with you in humble addressees, to his Highness, and his great Council, for the establishment of such a Church Government.

In the mean time though there may be such, who (as you say) live as lawless persons, out of their rank and order, yet are they subject to law, and therefore subject to punishment, for though your Ecclesiasticall sword cannot take hold on them, the civill sword doth reach them.

Your Class may do well then not to contemn (as in charity we hope you do not) the authority of the civill Magistrate, but in stead of warning all and every member belonging to them, to complain to the Eldership, of those that walk disorderly, and will not be reclaimed, to the end they may excommunicate them. That they exhort them to complain to the civill Magistrate, whose sword of Justice is sharper and longer, and likely to work a greater reformation in the lives, and manners of men, by a corporal and pecuniary Mulct, then any sword of excommunication or other Church censure your Eldership can any way pretend unto;

There are other parts of your paper do remain likewise dark, which we desire may be made plain unto us; for whereas you say,

There are many persons of all sorts, &c. That will not submit themselves to the present Government of the Church, but live as lawless persons, out of their rank and order: Our Quæres thereupon are;

1. Why Government *in singulari*? is there no Ecclesiasticall Government but yours? may not another Church have its Government different from yours, yet not different from that which Christ hath prescribed in his Word? *Calvin* saith, yea; *Scimus enim unicuique Ecclesia, &c.* And accordingly there are other Churches in *England* different in Government from yours, and as good as yours.

But

But if you say yours is the Government, (*nat' iſoxlu*) by way of eminency, as Christs own Government more immediately, and *jure divino*, which you so much defend, then why (the present) is there no present Government in any Church or Assembly of Saints, but where your discipline is erected? Are all the rest at present without Government? or where hath yours been this 1500. years past till this present? Hath *Antichristianism* so overspread the face of the Church that Christs own Government could never get footing till this present? But now subjection is required thereto of all, yet many of all sorts will not subject, but live as lawless persons, out of their rank and order.

Our next Quære is;

What? must all those that observe not your ranks and orders, subject not themselves to your present Government, be taken for lawless persons, out of their rank and order? Yea; for so this close connexion of yours seems to import, (*viz.*) *many who do not subject but live, &c.*

In your paper you further proceed, and make it an order, *That notice shall be taken of all persons, that forsake the publick assembly of Saints.*

We would gladly know how far you extend this Saintship, this Church and assembly of Saints, if to your own Church only, and such as subject themselves to your Government; then S. *Augustines* Answer against the *Donatists*, who would not acknowledge a Church in the World but amongst themselves, may also be yours, *O Impudentem Vocem!* (saith he) *Illā non est, Quia tu in illa non es: Vides nē tu ideo non sis, nam illa erit et si tu non sis.*

But if your charity reach further, then to your own assemblies, then you make lawless persons, such as will not subject themselves to your Government, Saints, and members at least of the invisible Triumphant Church, though none of your present visible militant Church; and then your charity over reacheth.

Again, we are unsatisfied in the Word (*Publique*) the publick assemblies of the Saints, What? do not private assemblies

blies please you? We presume you are not against private meetings, your own practice speaks the contrary: But you will binde all (notwithstanding your private Assemblies) to frequent your publique also, other wayes they shall be taken notice of: What? though they cannot submit to your Government? Leave you no room for tender consciences? The Laws of the Land have otherwayes provided: And if you, under color of authority, will make Laws and Edicts, and publish them openly in the Church, for all to obey, upon pain of excommunication, contrary to the Laws in force, whether you do it in contempt of the civill power, or through ignorance of the Laws; which later is rather to be supposed, in a charitable and favourable construction, yet in what sense soever it be taken, we much question, and it concerns you to look to it, whether you have not run your selves into a *præsumptio*.

Again, whereas you say, *That like notice shall be taken of all scandalous persons.* Our next *Quære* is: Whether those that forsake the publique Assemblies of Saints in the 2^d order, may not be taken for scandalous, and so comprehended in this 3^d. If so, *Quære oneramini ritibus?* why do you lengthen out your paper, and burden us with traditions, in multiplying of orders *sine necessitate ad Arithritim usque?*

After the 2^d and 3^d orders against those that forsake the publique Assemblies of Saints, and such as are scandalous, comes in a fourth, touching the *Catechumenists* in the first order mentioned; (*viz.:*) *That the Minister when he Catechizeth the severall Families, shall exhort such persons in them as he findes, be of competent knowledge, and are blameless in life, that they present themselves to the Eldership, that they may be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord supper:* But what if they will not present themselves before the Eldership? *The Minister must exhort and admonish them.* What if still they refuse? *Their names shall be published openly in the severall congregations, and they warned before all to reform.* That's the 5th. order. Mark! Men of blameless life and knowledge must be warned before all to reform.

But what if after all this they will not reform, but continue obstinate? *Then no admission to the Sacrament;* that's implied

in the fourth order ; There's their *Excommunicatio minor* : But that's not all, a higher censure yet ; *They shall be cast out, and excommunicated* ; So saith the 6th and last order, the great Excommunication, which casteth out of the Church also, and judgeth them no better, then Heathens, and Publicans, notwithstanding all their piety and knowledge.

So that, in brief, all wilfully ignorant and Scandalous are to be excommunicated ; and not onely they, but the knowing, and blameless of life, if they present not themselves to the Eldership. These things premised, lying sadly on our spirits and consciences, as not sound and orthodox, for which we cannot so readily joyn with you, till further satisfaction be given us, and which the publisher of your Paper promised should be given to all that did desire, We therefore thought fit to signify these our scruples to you, and shall wait earnestly for a speedy satisfaction in the particulars, remaining

*Your Brethren desirous of Truth, Unity
and Peace in the Church.*

Isaac Allen.
Jo: Pollett.
Tho: Prestwich.
Leonard Egerton.
Ferdinando Stanley.
&c.

At Manchester, Feb. 23. 1657.

The Answer of the First Classis within the Province of Lancaster, unto a Paper presented unto them at their Classi- cal meeting, Jan. 12. 1657. by certain Gentlemen, subscribed by them and sundry others within the bounds of this Association.

Gentlemen,

WE have perused your Paper, and do finde in it sundry mistakes, and some manifest wrestings of our plain meaning, in that Paper of ours, which was published in our several Congregations: And wee are also sensible of the sharp reflections in it, upon the Government, that is committed to our man- nagement, and on our selves. But wee shall not go about to answer you in that kinde: and therefore laying aside animosities, and putting away gall and bitterness, in the spirit of love and meeknesse, however in faithfulnessse and plainnesse, wee shall endeavor to shew you your Errors and rectifie your mistakes. And wee do thus farr acknowledg your fair dealing, (for which wee give you hearty thanks) that you addresse your selves unto us, giving us thereby the opportunity, both to vindicate our selves, and give you a right understanding of the maters where- in you are mistaken.

Our leasure will not permit us to spend time about imperti- nencies;

nencies; but yet, that you may not conceive wee are destitute
 of Civil Authority, (which you in your Paper minde us not to
 contain, and wee our selves do professedly testifie all due re-
 spects unto, as in duty wee are bound) wee intreat you to take
 notice, That the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament
 having resolved to establish the Presbyterian Government
 throughout the Kingdom of *England* and Dominion of *Wales*,
 did *August 19. 1645.* publish their directions, after advice had
 with the Assembly of Divines, for the electing and chusing of
 ruling Elders in all the Congregations, and in the Classi-
 cal Assemblies for the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, and the se-
 veral Counties of the Kingdom, for the speedy settling of the
 Presbyterian Government. In these directions, (as may be
 seen *pag. 8.*) they did ordain, That in the several Counties cer-
 tain persons, Ministers and others, should be appointed by authori-
 ty of Parliament, who should consider, how the several Counties re-
 spectively might be most conveniently divided into distinct Classi-
 cal Presbyteries; and what Ministers and others were fit to be of
 each Classis. And that they should accordingly make such divi-
 sion and nomination of persons for each Classical Presbytery. Which
 divisions, and persons so named for every division, the appointed
 should be certified up to the Parliament. And they further ap-
 pointed, That the said several Classes respectively being appro-
 ved by Parliament, within their several precincts should have power
 to constitute Congregational Elderships.

According to these directions, the persons by them appointed
 for this County met, and did consider, how it might be most
 conveniently divided into distinct Classical Presbyteries, and
 what Ministers and others were fit to be of each Classis: and
 also made such a division and nomination accordingly, and cer-
 tified the same up to the Parliament; All which being done ac-
 cording to their directions and appointment, It was resolved by
 the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, *Oct. 2. 1646.*
 That they did approve of the division of the County of *Lancaster*
 into nine Classical Presbyteries represented from the said County.
 And it was further resolved; That the said Houses did approve
 of the Ministers and other persons represented from the County of
Lancaster, as fit to be of the several and respective Classes, into
 which

which the said County was divided. Which division of this County into nine Classial Presbyteries, and the approval thereof by the said Lords and Commons was forthwith printed and published. In this division so made and approved, *The first Classis is to contain Manchester Parish, Prestwich Parish, Oldham Parish, Flixton Parish, Eccles Parish, and Ashton under-line Parish*, as by what was then printed, and is yet extant, is to be seen. Further, wee wish you to take notice, That in your fore-mentioned Directions pag. 3. Direction 6. it is there thus ordained, *That all Parishes and places whatsoever (as well privileged places and exempt Jurisdictions, as others) be brought under the government of Congregational, Classial, and National Assemblies.* Provided, that the Chappels or places in the houses of the Peers of this Realm should continue free for the exercise of Divine Duties, to be performed according to the Directory. And also, that it was ordered by the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, Decemb. 21. 1646. *That the several Classes in Lancashire should be one Province*; As appears by their Order to that purpose. As there is also another Order of theirs of Octob. 16. 1648. enabling the several Classes within this Province to send their Delegates to meet in a Provincial Assembly in Preston, and appointing the time of their first meeting; the number of the Delegates, that were to be sent to the said Assembly; and the *Quorum* of the Assembly, according to the provision that had been made before by the Parliament, before any Provincial Assembly could by virtue of their Authority be enabled to act Provincially. By which account thus given it is manifest, That the setting up the Presbyterian Government in this County: The division of it into several Classes: The making of those Classes into a Province, and their Acting Provincially: As also the appointing this Classis to be the first, (that is, the first in regard of the number onely, the account beginning here) was all done by Authority of Parliament. And that, when wee call our selves the first Classis within the Province of Lancaster, wee are awarranted thereto by authority of Parliament. And so your *Saluting us in our own terms*, (which wee gave not to our selves, till the Parliament had first given them to us) will not seem strange to them, that then did,

of now do, acknowledg that Authority and Power, which the Parliament exercised in those times. Especially considering there was nothing done since, either by that Parliament or any other, or by his Highnesse and the last Parliament, that takes from us what was then granted, and as wee shall clear further anon,

In your Preface to what in your Paper you have to say unto us, there is in the first place a mistake of that title, which was given by us unto ours; (which you call a Paper draught) for it was not by us intituled a Presentation (as you call it) but a *Draught, that represented to the Provincial Assembly our apprehensions in a case by them propounded unto us*; And was approved by the Provincial, under the Title of a *Representation*. But this perhaps was but the mistake of the Scribe, and wee insist not on it.

It is of greater weight and moment, to take notice of what you publish as your sense and apprehensions of it, (not resting in the judgment or determination of any general Council contrary therunto) if any such should be, much lesse to one of our Provincial Assemblies. Although you tell us, wee seem to submit to our Provincial, what wee will hardly grant to a general Council; in which you professe to differ from us.

Wee know very well, and have learned better from the Scriptures, then to resolve our Faith into the determination of any company of men on Earth whatsoever, or to build our Faith on the Judgment of Synods, Provincial or National; or of General Councils, that have been heretofore, or that may be hereafter. Wee are sure all men are fallible; and Faith, that is a sure and certain grace, must have a sure and certain Foundation, which is onely the infallible and written Word of God. And if this onely be your meaning, you have not us differing from you. But yet when wee consider, That Synods and Councils, rightly constituted and regularly called, as they may be then of great use for light and guidance, so also that they are the Ordinance of God, and by him invested with authority, and so have an authoritative Judgment belonging to them, and which is not in private persons, wee dare not contemn them, nor speak sleightly of them.

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them. And seeing the higher Assemblies have greater Authority then the lower, (as there is more power in the whole, then in the part; in the whole body, then in any one, or some members) and that, however wee are well enough satisfied, that wee have the Authority of a Classe, yet wee are under the Authority of the Provincial Assembly; Wee see not wherein wee offended, that wee submitted our apprehensions, in the Case propounded by that Assembly unto us, unto their Judgment. There is concerning matters of Religion *Judicium Privatum*, or a *Private Judgment*; and this belongs to all Christians, who are to see with their own eyes, and judge, concerning what is necessary for them to know and believe in matters of this nature. This Judgment, as there is good reason why wee should allow it to our selves, so wee should Lord it over mens consciences, if wee should deny it to any. There is also *Judicium Publicum & Authoritativum*, A Publick and an Authoritative Judgment; and this is either Concional, which belongs to every lawfull Minister (to whom the Key of Doctrine is committed) by himself singly: or else it is Juridical, and this belongs to Synods and Councils, who having the Key of Discipline, are invested with authority to inquire into, try, examine, censure and judg of matters of Doctrine and Discipline authoritatively, (although they be tyed to the rule of Gods Word in such proceedings, as Judges to the Law) & likewise to censure offenders according to their merit, when such cases are regularly and orderly brought before them. And in this sense it was, that we submitted our apprehensions in the Paper published to the Judgment of the Provincial Assembly. And we believe, when the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 14. 32. *That the spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets*: And our Saviour Christ saith, Mat. 18. *Tell the Church*: And when wee consider, what was practised by Paul and Barnabas, and certain others (who, upon occasion of a contest that arose in the Church at Antioch about a matter of Doctrine, were sent up from that Church to Jerusalem to the Apostles and Elders about that question) from these and other Scriptural grounds wee had sufficient ground for so doing. Wee are sure also, That *Whitaker de Concilio quæstione quinta*, and *Chamierus in his Pansfratæ de æcumenico Pontifice, ubi de Authoritate*

thoritate Papa in Ecclesiâ, cap. 13. & cap. 14. And generally all our Protestant Divines against the Papists, alledging the Texts above-mentioned and others, do prove abundantly, that in the sense declared, the Pope is to be subject to a general Council, wherein also sundry Papists do concur with them. And questionless, if in the time of *Augustine* (who was no contemner of Synods & Councils) any in this sense had declared, that they would not have submitted their apprehensions to their judgment, hee would have cried out against them as well as against the Donatists, *O impudentem vocem!* And we hope, when you have weighed the matter better, you will not in this sense see any reason to refuse to submit either your sense and apprehensions of our Paper, or what you may publish as your own private Judgments in other matters about Religion, to the Judgment of a general Council, supposing it might be had.

Wee have now done with your Preface, and come to the matter it self, wherein you professe,

(1.) *To joyn with us in a deep sense of the several grosse sins and errors of the times, desiring earnestly to mourn first for your own sins, next for the sins of others, &c.* And here wee do heartily pray, that neither wee nor you may any of us condemn our selves, either by professing our sorrow, for what sins we may practise, or by refusing to help forward the good that we professe to allow of, but may testifie the truth of our sorrow for our own and other mens sins, by suitable endeavors to reform what is amisse in our selves, and helping forward every one in his place the reformation of others.

(2.) In the next place, you say, *You are also sensible with us, that there are sundry persons grossly ignorant in the main points of Christian Religion.* And if so, wee hope you will acknowledg, that where, after the injoying of plenty of Preaching and the publick Catechizing, that hath been used for many years together, (and much more where there hath been lesse of this means) many continue grossly ignorant in the main points of Religion, it is at least not to be condemned in such Ministers, as shall be willing to take the pains by private Catechizing to instruct such persons: This course being to the Ministers a matter of pains

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onely;

onely ; and that hereupon, where the publick Catechizing attains not its desired end, the private may be good and usefull, that so poore souls perish not for lack of knowledg.

(3.) Lastly You hope, That wee with you are sensible and grieved, though, you say, wee do not mention them, for the grosse errors in judgment and damnable Doctrine of many, who have rent themselves into as many severall Heresies, as they have into Sects and Schisms.

You may perceive by the title of our Paper, that it was a representation of our apprehensions to the Provincial Assembly, in the Case to us propounded by the said Provincial, and what that was, wee shall particularly declare anon, (although by what wee say had been complained of, and represented unto us, it might be gathered) and therefore wee were chiefly to apply our selves to that, which was therein our main work and business. That the grosse and damnable errors, that the loosnesse of these times have brought forth, are to be bewailed (if it were possible) with tears of blood, is most freely to be confessed. And whether wee lay them not to heart in some good measure, God the searcher of all hearts hee knows ; as what complaints have been made of these by the members of this Classis, both in their prayers and preaching, men can witnesse ; and likewise what testimonies have been given to the truth of Jesus Christ, and against the errors of the times, subscribed with their hands and published to the world, though therein but concurring with the rest of their Reverend Brethren in this Province, in the Province of London, and other Counties of the Land, posterity may reade, when wee are in our graves. But as to the most of the Congregations belonging to this Classis, the great business to be looked after was the use of our best endeavors, for the informing of the ignorant, and the reforming of the scandalous, the numbers of these being great, and of those that are so grossly erroneous as to maintain damnable doctrines, and whereof you professe your selves to be so sensible, very inconsiderable, in comparison of the former : and in sundry of our Congregations, if not in most, (blessed be God for it) not any at all, that wee know of. And therefore there was not that reason to make any such expresse mention of these as of the former,

former, although in our Paper wee were not herein neither altogether silent, as will after appear.

Having professed your agreement with us thus farr, yo go on to declare your selves, *That, touching the way of informing the ignorant, and reforming the wicked and erroneous, you shall not much dissent.* And

(1.) You say, *For the Information and instruction of the ignorant by way of Catechizing before they be admitted to the Sacrament, the course by us published (provided, you say, it be in publick) little differeth from the Order prescribed by the Church of England and other Reformed Churches abroad, before any be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lords Supper.*

That all Children and others, (so many as it is fit to instruct after that manner) be publickly catechized, is that, which we heartily wish had been & were more generally practised in our own Church at home, as it is practised by the Reformed Churches abroad. And certainly, had the publick catechizing of Children and others been more generally and constantly practised, there had not been that cause to complain of the grosse ignorance of sundry persons of ripe years, and some of them governors of Families, as now there is. Wee do also understand you by what you do here expresse, that you judg it not meet, that the grossly ignorant should be admitted to the Lords Supper, in that you seem to approve of the practice of the Reformed Churches abroad, (as of our own at home) in taking course to inform the ignorant, before they admit them to the Sacrament of the Lords Supper; And therefore wee see not how you can in reason deny, but there ought to be an examination and trial of all persons, before they be admitted to the Lords Supper, that so the grossly ignorant may not be admitted, as they might be, if all promiscuously were admitted without any trial at all.

But whereas, in this concession about catechizing, you have a *Proviso*, that it be in publick, wee do not see, why you should so limit it, if it be confessed, that it is necessary, that the ignorant should be informed, and that catechizing is an usefull means to attain that end. You know how it would dash sundry knowing persons to be catechized publickly in the Congregation.

But as for those that are conscious to themselves, that they are very ignorant, if these should be called forth to publique Catechizing, it were more likely to drive them from the publique Assembly, and so from the use of all means for their information, then be availeable to this end. As touching what was propounded by us in our paper, as the way for their information (though it was not intended for any such a purpose as to exclude publique Catechizing) it was done in way of condescension to the weakest, and to shew our willingness to apply our selves to any course, so we might be instrumentall to bring poor dark and blinde Souls to the knowledge of Christ, and which in our Judgement is more likely to be attained in many, as the case stands with them, in a more private way of Catechizing in any of the wayes propounded by us, then if we should Catechize all the severall Families publicquely before the whole congregation.

(2) Touching those *that erre so grossely, whether in Doctrinals or points of discipline, thereby renting from a true constituted Church, you say, we speak nothing, either of their sin or punishment, yet you hope, we with you do hold, that the Churches lawfull Pastors have the power of the keyes committed to them, to excommunicate such offenders.*

We have given you the reason already, why we made not such expresse mention of these offenders, as of the former, although (as you will hereafter perceive) we are not wholly silent touching either the sin or punishment of these. Onely at present, because you profess to allow of that previous course of admonition prescribed by Christ, in reference to the scandalous *Mat. 18.* before they be excommunicated, but here say nothing of any such course to be taken with the hereticall or schismaticall; (though we hope also of you, that you disallow it not) we shall briefly declare, what course is to be held by the rules of the Presbyterian Government, before the sentence of excommunication pass against these offenders, and whereof our paper was not silent. This Government, however it gives no toleration to *any such errors, as subvert the faith; or any other errors, which overthrow the power of godliness; if the party, who holds them, spreads them, seeking to*
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draw others after him , or to any such practises , as in their own nature manifestly subvert that order , Unity and Peace ; which Christ hath established in his Church. These being offences censured by this Government , (and of which further afterward ,) yet this Government prescribes the exercise of patience and long suffering (even toward those that do grossly erre in Doctrine as well as toward those that are scandalous in life) in the use of all means for the convincing them of their errors ; by reasoning with them out of the Scriptures : as we see was practised in the Synod , that was held at *Jerusalem* ; and as we see the Fathers of the *Nicene* Council , did not disdain to reason and dispute with *Arrius* (though he denyed the Deity of Christ) before they condemned him : And as also other Fathers did with other Hereticks in the Synods , although oftentimes in vain. That so none might have any just cause to complain , that they were condemned , before they were fully heard. And as touching such as run into such practices , as in their own nature tend manifestly to the subverting of that order and unity which Christ hath established in the Church , it labours with these also in the use of all gentle means to reclaim them , and bring them back again to the Church they have rent themselves from , before it proceed to censure. As it doth also put a difference between the seducers, and ring-leaders of a Sect , and those that are misled. Having respect not only to the nature of the offence , but also to the quality of the offender ; and exerciseth patience and forbearance towards all , so long as there is any hope of reducing them by milde correction : Being ever more desirous to heal , then cut off any member. And thus having declared our selves in this , we go on with you.

(3) For you say ; *For such as are scandalous and wicked in their lives , admonition private and publique is to be observed , according to Christs rule Mat. 18. But if they still continue , and will not reform , the Churches lawfull Pastors have power to excommunicate such.*

In this you fully come up to what we hold , as to the means , that is to be used for the reformation of these , and we are glad there is an agreement in judgement betwixt you and us thus far. Neither can we see how , upon this concession , you can in reason

son finde fault with our proceedings, if there should be occasion for our censuring any such persons, as for their notorious offences and their obstinacy therein, might justly merit the highest censure.

For however, perhaps you may say, you stumble chiefly at this, that our ruling Elders (that in your judgement may be but meet Lay-men) do joyn in the Government with us; yet we see not how this can be any just ground of scruple to any of you, who (if we mistake not) were all of you satisfied in your consciences touching the lawfulness of the late Government of Episcopacy, as it was then exercised, at least as to submission to it; and wherein High-Commissioners, Chancelors and Commissaries (that were as much Lay-men then, as ruling Elders can be in your judgement now) had so great a share, as to suspend Ministers from the exercise of their Ministry, upon such complaints as, according to the orders, that were appointed in those dayes, they might take cognizance of, and so far, as to decree the sentence of excommunication against them and others, as there was occasion for it.

Dr Hammond. But here we must yet further profess, we do not know, whom you mean by lawfull Pastors, to whom you here grant the power of excommunication. Some we know, there are, that would make the Diocesan Bishops the onely Pastors of the Church, and that other Ministers do but officiate by deputation from them and under them. We hope you are not of the minde of these. For then, as the dissent in judgement betwixt you and us would be far greater, then as yet we apprehend it is; so hence it will follow, that, till Prelacy should be restored, there must not (if you would provide for the safety of the persons and estates of them that should mannage the Government) be the dispensing of any Church censures at all. For you may easily know, that not only by Acts and Ordinances of Parliament before made for the abolishing of Archbishops and Bishops, &c. (and which are confirmed by the late humble Advice assented unto by his Highness *sect. 12.*) the office and jurisdiction of Diocesan Bishops is taken away. But there is yet a further Barre put in against Prelacy in the *11. sect.* of the aforesaid humble Advice; where it is expressly cautioned; (and we

we judge it was out of a conscientious mindfulness of what had been in those very termes covenanted against) what the liberty, that is granted to some, be not extended to Popery and Prelacy. And therefore if any Diocesan Bishop should exercise his jurisdiction, and excommunicate any person within this Land, wherein by Authority (as you may see afterward) there is also an appointment of another Government, we leave it to those, that are learned in the Law to determine, whether such Diocesan Bishops would nor run themselves into a *periculum*.

But if you do not restrain lawfull Pastors to these onely, our doubt yet is, Whether you mean not onely such Ministers, as were ordained by Diocesan Bishops, excluding those out of the number; than, since their being taken away, have been ordained by Presbyters onely?

If this be your sense, we shall onely at present minde you, of what is published, to be the Judgement of Dr *Usher* late Primate of *Ireland*, in a Book lately put forth by Dr *Bernard*, Preacher to the Honourable Society of *Grays-Inn*; and whom, though a stranger to us, and one of a different judgement from us in the point of Episcopacy, yet we reverence for his moderation and profession of his desires for peace; wishing that such, as do consent in substantialls for matter of Doctrine, would consider of some conjunction in point of Discipline. That private interests and circumstantialls might not keep them thus far asunder.

In which wish as we do cordially joyn our selves, so we heartily desire, that all godly and moderate spirited men throughout the Land would also do so. But the book, which the said Doctor hath lately published, is intituled. *The Judgement of the late Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, &c.* In this Book this Doctor tells us, that the late Primate in Answer to a letter of his (sent to him as it should seem for that purpose) declares his Judgement touching the ordination of the Ministry in the Reformed Churches in *France* and *Holland*. There he saith, that *Episcopus & Presbyter gradu tantum differunt, non ordine*. And consequently, that in places, where Bishops cannot be had, the ordination by Presbyters standeth valid. And in the close of his Answer about this point he saith; *That for the* * See pag. 144 of his last Book.
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testifying of his Communion with the Churches (of the Low-Courtesy) of whom he had spoken immediately before: and which he there professeth, *He doth love and honour as true members of the Universall Church*: (notwithstanding the difference, that was betwixt him and them about the point of Episcopacy) he doth profess, *That with like affection he should receive the blessed Sacrament at the hands of the Dutch Ministers, if he were in Holland, as he should do at the hands of the French Ministers if, he were in Charenton.* See pag. 125. and 126. Hence you may perceive, that the Judgement of D^r Usher was; That the Ordination of Presbyters, where Bishops cannot be had, standeth valid. And consequently, if you be of his opinion, (and you must have stronger reasons, then ever yet we have seen, to bear you out therein if you judge otherwise) they ought to be esteemed lawfull Pastors, to whom you grant the power of Excommunication, Bishops being now taken away, and may not therefore ordain according to the present Laws of the Land. The said D^r Bernard hath some animadvertisements upon that Letter (in which D^r Usher doth deliver his judgement, as above said) and there shews, that he was not in this Judgement of his singular. He alledgeth D^r Davenant, that pious and learned Bishop of Sarisbury, as consenting with him in it (in his determinations quest. 42.) and produceth the principall of the Schooleman, *Gulielmus Parisiensis*, Gerson, Durand, &c. and declares it to be the Generall opinion of the Schoolemen; *Episcopatum ut distinguitur à simplici sacerdotio non esse alium ordinem*, &c. see pag. 130. of the aforementioned Book, as also pag. 131. 132. Where the concurrence of D^r Davenant with D^r Usher in his judgement about this matter is declared more fully. He addes also others, as in Speciall, D^r Richard Field in his learned Book of the Church lib. 3. cap. 39. and lib. 5. cap. 27. And also that Book intituled *A defence of the Ordination of the Ministers of the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas*, maintained by Archdeacon Mason against the Romanists. And further he saith; *He hath been assured, it was not only the Judgement of Bishop Overall; but that he had a principall hand in it.* He tell us, that the fore-mentioned Author produceth many testimonies, The M^o of the Sentence, and most of the Schoolemen,

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Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Durand, Dominicus Soto, Richardus Armachanus, Tostatus, Alphonsus a Castro, Gerson, Petrus Canisius, *to have affirmed the same; and at last, quoteth Medina a principall Bishop of the Councill of Trent, who affirmed, That Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Sedulius, Primasius, Chrysostome, Theodoret, Theophylact were of the same judgment also.* But you may see these things your selves in D^r Bernard, pag. 132, 133, 134. Wee have been onely at the pains to transcribe them.

Wee could alledg many more Testimonies to prove this: But wee count these sufficient; and do alledg theie the rather, because brought by one that is of the same Judgment with you, as wee suppose.

But having declared how farr you accord with us in Judgment, touching the way of informing the ignorant, and reforming the wicked persons, and schismatical, &c. you tell us; *That you are not therein so wavering and unsettled in your apprehensions of the Case, as to submit either it or them, either wholly or in part, to the contrary Judgment and determination of a general Council of the Eastern and Western Churches, much lesse to a new termed Provincial Assembly at Preston; wherein you professe no little to differ from us.*

That, which wee submitted wholly to the Judgment of the Provincial Assembly, was not, whether Catechizing was a way appointed by God in his Word, for the information of the ignorant; but in what way of Catechizing (as is expressed in our Paper) the ignorant in our Congregations, who never offered themselves unto the Sacrament, were most like to be brought to some measure of knowledg; and which is not a matter of Doctrine but of Order onely. Neither was it by us submitted to that Assembly; whether the censures of the Church were the means appointed by Christ for the reforming of the scandalous? But whether it might not be meet *pro hic & nunc*, and as the present case stood, to apply the Censures? (and so put in practice at this time that, which in the General wee were sufficiently assured from the word of Truth, was the way for their reformation) and with which wee were both by God and Man intrusted to dispense unto those that were openly scandalous in

our Congregations ; However they contented themselves to live in the want of the Lords Supper , nor ever presented themselves to the Eldership to be admitted to it. And this (because meere circumstantiall, as to the dispensing of the Censures at this time and to such Persons) we think herein we owed the Provinciaall Assembly (unto whose Authority we profess our selves to be subject) so much respect and duty , as to submit our apprehensions in a Case of this nature (which they had propounded unto us to be seriously weighed , as they had done to the rest of the Classes within this Province) unto their Judgement , and to take their concurrent approvall along with us , before we proceeded to practise in a matter of this weight. And yet we have declared before , That however we are not so wavering and unsettled in matters of faith , as to resolve our belief into the determination of *Synods* or Councils , believing no more , nor no otherwise , then as they determine : Yet that it is not out of the compass of the authority of a *Synod* to examine , try and authoritatively to censure Doctrines as well as matters of Discipline. And we think (how confident soever you may be of the soundness and orthodoxness of what in your Paper you propound in way of exception against any thing in ours) you have not such clear and unquestionable grounds from Scripture for the same , that you were to be accused of wavering or unsettledness , if you had submitted the same to have been examined and tried by a Provincial Assembly : and much less , if you could have had the opportunity of submitting it to the Censure of a General Council.

But whereas mentioning our Provincial Assembly at *Preston*, you call it a new termed *Provincial Assembly*. If your meaning be , that the terming it a Provincial Assembly in stead of a Provincial *Synod* is a new term , then this is but onely a *Logomachia* , and not much to be insisted on. Although we frequently call it a Provincial *Synod* as well as a Provincial Assembly. But if your meaning be ; *That it is a new termed Provincial Assembly at Preston*. Because Provinciaall *Synods* or Assemblies have been held but lately at *Preston* , we see not (if Provincial Assemblies be warrantable , and have been of ancient use in the Church) that having been long in dis-use , they begin of late

late to be held at *Preston*, that can justly incurre your censure. But if the Antiquity of such Assemblies be that you question: Then we referte you to what *D^r Bernard* in the Book of his above quoted, shews was the Judgement of *D^r Usher* (who is acknowledged by all that knew him, or are acquainted with his works, to have been a great Antiquary; however we alleadge him not, that you should build your faith upon his Testimony) and which we think may be sufficient to vindicate Provincial Assemblies in your thoughts from all suspicion of novelty. In that Book you have in the close of it proposals touching the Reduction of Episcopacy unto the form of *Synodical Government* received in the ancient Church. And it thus begins. *By the Order of the Church of England, all Presbyters are charged to administer the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Realm hath received. And that they might the better understand, what the Lord hath commanded herein, The exhortation of Paul to the Elders of Ephesus Acts 20. 28. is appointed to be read unto them at the time of their Ordination.* A little after it is acknowledged, *That Ignatius by Presbytery mentioned by Paul 1 Tim. 4. 14. did understand the Community of the rest of the Presbyters or Elders, who then had a hand, not onely in the delivery of the Doctrine and Sacraments, but also in the administration of the Discipline of Christ.* And for further proof. *Tertullian is alleadged in his Generall Apologie for Christians. Where he saith, that in the Church are used exhortations, chastisements and divine censure; For Judgement is given with great advice, as among those, who are certain, they are in the sight of God. And it is the chiefest foreshewing of the Judgement to come, if any man have so offended, that he be banished from the Communion of Prayer, and of the Assembly, and of all holy Fellowship. The Presidents, that bear rule therein, are certain approved Elders, who have obtained this honour, not by reward, but by good report. There also is further shewed, That in matters of Ecclesiastical judicature, Cornelius Bishop of Rome used the received form of gathering together the Presbytery. And that Cyprian sufficiently declares of what Persons that consisted; When he wisheth him to read his Letter to the flourishing Clergy, which there did preside*

or rule with him. And further, That in the 4th Council of Carthage it was concluded. That the Bishop might hear no mans cause without the presence of the Clergy. And that otherwise the Bishops sentence should be void, unless it were confirmed by the Clergy. And yet further. That this is found inserted into the Canons of Egbert (who was Archbishop of York in the Saxon times) and afterwards into the body of the Canon law it self. It is here also acknowledged, That in our Church, this kind of Presbyterian Government hath been much disused. Yet that it did profess, that every Pastor hath a right to rule the Church (from whence also the name of Rector was at first given unto him) and administer the Discipline of Christ, as well as to dispence the Doctrine and Sacraments, &c. By all which it is acknowledged, and also proved; That the form of Government by the united suffrages of the Clergy, is ancient: and which is there in expresse termes asserted; as it might be demonstrated by many more Testimonies, but that we conceive these already mentioned are sufficient, and being alleaded by the aforementioned Author, As also evidencing what his own Judgement was in this point, may be more likely to sway with you (if in that there should be a dissent betwixt you and us) then any thing, that we could our selves produce. But in this reduction of Episcopacy to the form of Synodical Government received in the ancient Church, there are proposals of Assemblies of Pastors within certain limited bounds. Which (saying that they are some of them somewhat larger then ours, which is but a circumstantial difference) do hold proportion with the Classial, Provincial, and National Assemblies, mentioned in the form of our Church Government. As also the times propounded there for their meeting, the power of these Assemblies, and what they were to have Cognizance of, and the subordination of the lesser to the greater, with liberty of Appeal; if need should require, and are the same in substance as with us. And all these were propounded, as the way of Government in the ancient Church, and in the year 1641. (after the troubles, that had risen in Scotland about Episcopacy and the Ceremonies, and before the setting up of the Presbyterian Government in this Land, had so much as fallen under debate in the Parliament,

To far as ever we heard of) as an expedient to prevent the troubles, that did after arise in this Land about the matter of Church Government, being for the moderating of Episcopacy; That at that time was grown to that height, that it had quite taken away from the Pastors that rule, that of right did belong unto them; And for the Reduction of it to the ancient form of *Synodical* Government. And therefore in the Judgement of this learned and reverend Antiquary, our Provincial Assembly at *Preston* (where the Pastors of the Churches are members, as he acknowledgeth of right they ought to be in such Assemblies) would not have been accounted a new termed Provincial Assembly.

But you go on and tell us. *That other parts of our Paper are full of darkness, to which you say, you cannot so fully assent, till further explicated and unfolded by us.*

We cannot apprehend any such darkness in our Paper, as you speak of. But yet because in yours, you question what authority we have from the civil Magistrate, for what we do, and likewise the extent of it: and your mistakes of our meaning may perhaps some of them arise from your unacquaintedness with the rule we walk by. Although we were not to be blamed for any mistakes, that might arise *ab ignorantia juris* (whether simple or affected, that we determine not, but leave you to examine;) Before we come to make Answer more particularly to what follows, we are willing to be at some paines to give you some further account of the power we are awarranted by the civil Authority, for to exercise. To what persons within our bounds it extends it self: and what some of those rules are, that are prescribed unto us by civil Authority, to walk by in the exercise of that power we are betruſted with.

It is a general and common mistake amongst many, that the Presbyterian Government was established by the Parliament but for three yeers, and that therefore it is now expired and out of date. But if you peruse all that passed in Parliament touching it, no such matter will appear. *The directions of the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament, after advice had with the Assembly of Divines, for the Electing and chusing Ruling Elders in all the Congregations; and in the Classcal Assemblies;*
for

for the Cities of London and Westminster, and the severall Counties of the Kingdom; For the speedy settling of the Presbyterian Government, bearing date August. 19. 1645. Their Ordinance together with Rules and Directions, concerning suspension from the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, in cases of Ignorance and Idleness, dated Octob. 20. 1645. The Votes also of the said Houses for the Choise of Elders throughout the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales in the respective Parish Churches and Chappels, according to the directions before mentioned. And touching the power granted to the Tryers of Elections of Elders, Of the date of Feb. 20. 1645. and Feb. 26. 1645. Their Ordinance for keeping scandalous Persons from the Sacrament of the Lords Supper; the inabling of Congregations for the choice of Elders, and supplying of defects in former Ordinances and Directions of Parliament concerning Church Government, bearing date March 14. 1645. The Remedies prescribed by them for removing some obstructions in Church Government, dated Aprill. 22^d 1647. And their Ordinance for the speedy dividing and settling the severall Counties of this Kingdom into distinct Classicall Presbyteries and Congregationall Elderships, dated Jan. 29. 1647. We say, all these were passed absolutely without any proviso's at all, limiting the time of their continuance, that is expressed in any of them. Indeed in the Ordinance of Parliament giving power to all the Classicall Presbyteries within their respective bounds, to examine, approve and ordain Ministers for severall Congregations, dated Nov. 10. 1645. It is provided in the Close of it, That it shall stand in force for twelve moneths, and no longer. As it is provided in another Ordinance for the Ordination of Ministers by the Classicall Presbyters within their respective bounds for the severall Congregations in the Kingdom of, England bearing date August. 28. 1646. That it shall stand in force for three years and no longer. Which latter might give to some (that took but the matter upon report) an occasion to conceive, that the Presbyterian Government was settled but for three years. Although that was but ill applied to all the severall Ordinances that had passed before, which belonged onely to one. But the Ordinance especially, from which chiefly (as we conceive) the mistake arose about settling

settling the Presbyterian Government for three years onely, was the Ordinance that passed June 5. 1646. The title whereof is, *An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament, for the present settling (without further delay) of the Presbyteriall Government in the Church of England.* In the Close whereof it is ordained. *That this Ordinance shall continue for the space of three years, and no longer, unless both Houses think fit to continue it. But if the matter of this Ordinance be consulted, it is manifest it was but touching a Committee of Lords and Commons to adjudge and determine scandalous offences not formerly enumerated, appointed by the Ordinance in stead and place of Commissioners mentioned in the Ordinance of March 14. 1645. And also skewing how the Elderships were to proceed in the examination of such scandalous offences. And touching what power was granted to the said Committee, and in what sort they were to proceed, as is clear to any, that shall but take the paines to peruse that Ordinance. The ground whereof in the preface to it, is made to be this. The Lords and Commons in Parliament holding their former resolution, that all notorious and scandalous offenders shall be kept from the Sacrament, have thought fit to make a further addition to the scandalous offences formerly enumerated, for which men shall be kept back from the Sacrament. And lest the stay of the enumeration, and the not naming of Commissioners to judge of Cases not enumerated, should hinder the putting in execution the Presbyterian Governement already established, They have thought fit, &c. And do therefore ordain a Committee (therein particularly nominated) in stead and place of Commissioners.*

The groundlesness of the mistake about settling the Presbyterial Government for three years onely, that might arise from the proviso in this Ordinance, is so clear to any common understanding, that the bare recitall of the sum of the matter of this Ordinance, and the ground of making it, doth make it so fully to appear, that it were but lost labour to use any more words about it. But we have particularly mentioned all that ever passed the Parliament (so far as we have either seen or heard of) that hitherto concerned Church Government, untill the year 1648. When the form of Church Government to

be used in the Church of England and Ireland was agreed upon by the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament, after Advice had with the Assembly of Divines, and was ordered by them to be printed August. 19. of the said year 1648. And this Ordinance (wherein all that had passed the Parliament before in parts, and at severall times, and what ever was but temporary, by vertue of other Ordinances (so far as was intended for continuance) are moulded up into a complete body, with a supply of sundry things that had been never mentioned nor published before in other Ordinances) is without any limitation of time for its continuance, and remains unrepealed to this day, for any thing we have seen or heard to the contrary. Nay we think (as we shall touch upon anon) That by the humble Advice, assented to by his Highness, this Ordinance (as well as others) receives strength.

But by this full account given, we think we have made it sufficiently to appear, that we have had the Authority of the civill Magistrate to bear us out, in what we have acted since the first setting up of the Presbyterian Government untill this present. Except there be any, that can come forth, and charge us to have transgressed the rules appointed by the Parliament for us to observe in our actings, against which our own innocency only shall be our defence.

It now remaines for your further satisfaction and our own vindication, that we recite some things particularly out of the form of Church Government, which we conceive are thereunto subservient.

In the very first Words of the Ordinance (according to what we have before recited in the directions for the electing and choosing of ruling Elders, and is there also to be found) you may find it thus. *Be it ordered and ordained by the Lords and Commons in Parliament Assembled and by Authority of the same, That all Parishes and Places whatsoever within the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales, (as well Priviledged Places and exempted jurisdictions, as others) be brought under the Government of Congregationall, Classicall, Provinciall and Nationall Assemblies, &c.* Where it is to us unquestionable, That by vertue of this appointment, such as live within the bounds
of

of our severall congregations and Parishes are under the power of some one or other of the Congregational Elderships, constituted by Authority of Parliament within our severall Parishes ; And that all those, that live within the bounds of our Classis (mentioned before) are under the power of our Classicall Assembly, constituted in like manner by the said Authority.

What power is given particularly to the congregational Elderships, you may finde in the aforesaid form of Church Government, and unto which we refer you ; onely we shall minde you, *That by vertue thereof, they have power, as they shall see just occasion, to enquire into the knowledge and spirituall estate of any member of the Congregation to admonish, and rebuke, to suspend from the Lords Table, those who are found by them, to be ignorant and scandalous, and to excommunicate according to the rules and directions after following.* And it is thereby ordained, *That the Examination and Judgement of such Persons, as shall for their ignorance in the points of Religion, mentioned in that Ordinance, not be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, is to be in the power of the Eldership of every Congregation.* All which will appear by the expresse Letter of the said Ordinance, to any, that will consult it, and which not only justifies all that is practised in that case by the severall Elderships, but also shews what grounds this Classis had for that which was mentioned in our Paper, touching both what is therein appointed to the Minister about Catechizing Families, and also concerning the Ministers exhorting such, as in the severall Families he should finde to be of competent knowledge, and know to be of blameless life, That they should present themselves to the Eldership ; The Triall and Judgement in this case not belonging to any one Minister alone, but to the Eldership.

There are also rules and directions given in this Ordinance to be observed by the severall Elderships, concerning suspension from the Sacrament of the Lords Supper in cases of scandall, which may be seen there particularly. But there is no rule given, that will allow either the Eldership or Classis, according to the severall powers to them therein granted, either to warn before all, or to excommunicate knowing and blameless men

for their meet not presenting themselves before the Eldership.

The rules of this Government prescribe otherwise; as we our selves must also needs profess, that we are not conscious to our selves, that we have given any just occasion by our management thereof, That contrary to the expresse rules appointed therein to be observed by us, and to the plain sense of our expressions used in our Paper (of which afterward,) any such a thing should have been so much as supposed to have been intended from any thing there expressed.

Give us leave to proceed a little further, to lay open the order that is prescribed in the above mentioned form of Church Government, touching the order of proceeding to excommunication; which as it will awarrant the publishing of mens names openly in the Congregation, and warning them before all to reform, being such as are justly censurable by the rules thereof, and particularly where it prescribes, *that several publique admonitions shall be given to the offenders, &c.* So it will awarrant us in any thing, that is made censurable by that Paper of ours, that was published.

To make this to appear, as also to shew what reason, we had to make known to the several congregations within our bounds, what our Paper held forth. We shall here declare, what offences are censurable with this greatest and last censure of Excommunication, according to the order, that is there prescribed, and which, as it requires, *that it be inflicted with great and mature deliberation, and after all other good means have been essayed*; so it appoints in these expresse Words.

That such Errours in practice as subvert the Faith, or any other Errours, which overthrow the power of Godliness; if the party who holds them, spread them, seeking to draw others after him; and such sins in practice, as cause the Name and Truth of God to be blasphemed, cannot stand with the power of godliness; and such practises, as in their own nature manifestly subvert that order, unity and Peace, which Christ hath established in his Church; and particularly all those scandalous sins, for which any Person is to be suspended from the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, obstinately persisted in; these being publickly known, to the just scandal

dall of the Church; The sentence of Excommunication may and ought to proceed, according to the directions after following.

But the Persons, that hold other Errors in Judgement, about which learned and Godly men possibly may and do differ, and which subvert not the faith, nor are destructive to godliness, or that be guilty of such sins or infirmities, as are commonly found in the Children of God: or being otherwise sound in the faith, and holy in life (and so not falling under censure by the former rules) endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of Peace; and do yet out of conscience, not come up to the observation of all those rules, which are or shall be established by Authority, for regulating the outward worship of God, and Government of his Church. The sentence of excommunication for these causes shall not be denounced against them.

These things this Classis taking into Consideration, together with the power they were entrusted with by God and Man, for the dispensing the censures of the Church, in the cases censurable by the rules here laid down and elsewhere, in the form of Church Government: And there having been in the Provincial Assembly severall debates touching such Persons as in the severall Congregations were ignorant and scandalous, who offered not themselves to the Sacrament, nor to the Eldership in order to their admission to it: and they commending it to the severall Classical Presbyteries to be considered of, whether some further course was not to be held, for the information of the one, and the reformation of the other, then yet had been taken, notwithstanding their neglect; and what they judged fittest to be done for the attaining those ends; and to represent their thoughts therein to the next Assembly. This Classis upon the whole concluded to represent their apprehensions in the Case, as is expressed in the Paper that was published, which was approved of before by the Provincial Assembly, and which they judge is sufficiently warranted, in regard of any thing therein contained, by the rules expressed in the above mentioned form of Church Government.

We having thus far shewed what we have been, and are warranted to practice by the severall Ordinances above mentioned, we shall now proceed further to declare. That how-

ever we are no Lawyers, and therefore leave the determination of the Case to the learned in the Law to judge of, to whom it belongs: yet if it may be lawfull for us to judge of a matter of this nature from the principles of reason; It seems to us, that the above mentioned Ordinances about Church Government, as well as other Ordinances of Parliament, are confirmed in the humble Advice assented unto by his Highness in the 16. section thereof. Where we finde these Words. *And that nothing contained in this Petition and Advice, nor your Highnesss consent thereunto, shall be construed to extend to the repealing or making void of any Act or Ordinance, which is not contrary hereunto, or to the matters herein contained. But that the said Acts and Ordinances, not contrary hereunto, shall continue and remain in force, in such manner, as if this present Petition and Advice had not at all been had or made, or your Highnesss consent thereunto given.* Whence we gather, that if in the several Ordinances for Church Government, there be nothing contrary to the humble Advice, or to the matters therein contained, they are not thereby (any more then any other Acts or Ordinances of Parliament) repealed, but left to remain in force. At least, there seems to us to be a plain intimation, that they have a force in them; which is not by this humble Advice repealed and made void. For it doth not appear to us, That there is any thing in the Form of Church Government, or any other Ordinances of Parliament about that matter; that is contrary to the humble Advice or matters therein contained. And whereas in the 11th section there is mention made of some that differ in worship and discipline from the publique profession of these Nations held forth, to whom some indulgence is granted; It seems to us, there is an acknowledgement and owning of what the late Parliament held forth, in regard of these the Directory for worship and form of Church Government, which they passed, as the publique profession of these Nations in regard of worship and discipline. And in which apprehensions we are the more confirmed, because here in this section, mention is made of a confession of faith to be agreed on by his Highness and the Parliament, there having nothing in that kind passed the late Parliament, that established the Directory for

for worship and form of Church Government. However there had been a Confession of faith drawn up by the late Assembly of Divines; Whence it seems to us clear, that they own the Directory for worship, and the form of Church Government, to be that which they hold forth, as the publique profession of the Nation for worship and Government. To the same purpose we find in the Government of the Commonwealth of *England, Scotland and Ireland, &c.* As it was publickly declared at *Westminster Decemb. 16. 1653. pag. 43. Sect. 37.* *Where also they express a worship and Discipline publickly held forth, which must needs referre to the Directory and form of Church Government by us recited;* There being no other worship or discipline, that then had, or now hath, the civill Sanction, in this Nation.

We have been large, in what we have here represented in the generall, before we come to speak more particularly to the rest, that now follows in your Paper. But our pains being greater to make this full representation unto you, then it will be for you to read it, we must intreat you to excuse us, considering it tends as well to rectifie your mistakes, as to vindicate our selves; being also desirous not to be mistaken any more, as also because it layes a foundation for our briefer and more particular Answer unto what follows, and to which (these things being thus premised) we now come.

In the things, wherein you profess your selves to dissent, till further explicated and unfolded by us.

(1) The first thing we meet with here is; That by the many Persons of all sorts, that are members of Congregations, and mentioned in our Paper, in your sense thereof we seem to hint, that thereby we mean onely such, *who have admitted themselves members of some Congregation within our association, and yet live inordinately; &c.* And that therefore you, who never were any members or associates of ours, are not within the verge and compass of our Presbyterian discipline, &c. Unto which we say; That we have constantly professed against those of the separation. That the severall Assemblies or Congregations within this Land, that make a profession of the true Christian and Apostolique Faith, are true Churches of Jesus Christ.

Christ. That the several members of these Congregations are by their birth, members, as those that were born in the Jewish Church, are said to be, by the Apostle, Jews by nature: *Gal. 2.* That this their membership was sealed to them in their Baptism, that did solemnly admit them, as into the universal Church, so into the particular, wherein they were born. We have also constantly maintained against the afore mentioned Persons; That the Ministers of these Churches are true Ministers, notwithstanding that exception of theirs against them, that they were ordained by Bishops, who also themselves were true Ministers in our Judgement (though we cannot acknowledge, that by divine right they were superiour to their fellow brethren, either in regard of order or jurisdiction) And that therefore the Word and Sacraments (the most essential marks of a true visible Church, according to the professed Judgement of our Divines against the Papists on the one hand, and those of the separation on the other) dispensed by these Ministers, were, and are the true Ordinances of Jesus Christ. And that hereupon our work was not (when the Presbyterian Government was appointed) to constitute Churches, but to reform them onely. And that therefore none within our bounds, except they shall renounce Christianity and their Baptism, can be deemed by us to be without, in the Apostles sense; and so therefore not within the compass and verge of our Presbyterian Government. Neither is it their not associating with us in regard of Government, that doth exempt them from censure by it, if they should be such offenders, as by the rules thereof were justly censurable. It not being a matter arbitrary, for private Persons at their own will and pleasure to exempt themselves from under that Ecclesiastical Government, that is settled by Authority. And as you know it would not have been allowed of under the former Government.

(2) And therefore whether you, and all others within our bounds, be not comprehended within our Government, according to the rules laid down in the Ordinance of Parliament above mentioned, appointing the form of Church Government to be used in the Church of *England* and *Ireland*, and therein ordaining, as hath been recited before in the first page thereof,
and

and to which we refer you. (Especially considering, that all within the bounds of our several Parishes (that are no other now then formerly) even Papists and Anabaptists and other Sectaries, were under the late Prelatical Government) we leave it to you to judge. Onely if so, we wish you to consider, that then you are brought under the Government of Presbytery, not so much by us, as by the Parliament appointing this Government. And then we think you, who warn us not to contemn civil power, might well (out of respect to the Authority ordaining it, but especially considering the word Presbytery is a known Scripture expression 1 Tim. 4. and interpreted by sundry of the Fathers, as we do, as hath been declared before) have used a more civil expression, then to have called it a common sold, into which (it should seem) your complaint is, that you should be driven. Although Presbytery layes restraint on none, but such as being scandalous in their lives, and so contemning the Laws of God, are therefore truely and indeed the lawless Persons, that we speak of. But whereas (as you suppose) *This is our chief design in this, as in other transactions of ours, to subject all to our Government.*

We do refer our selves to our course of life past, and hope it will witness with us, to all that will judge impartially, what our designs have been in our other transactions. And as touching our design in the Paper published, whether it hath been ought but the information of the ignorant, and reformation of the scandalous, to the Glory of God and their salvation, we leave it to be judged by those, that will judge of mens intentions by what is expressed in their words and actions.

We know very well, we are charged by some, that we affect Dominion, to Lord it over the People, and to have all sorts of Persons, of what rank soever, to stoop to us. But we do openly profess, that the Government of the Church, that is committed unto men, is not Despotical, but Ministerial. That it is no Dominion, but a Ministry onely. And that the Officers, that are intrusted with it, are themselves to be subject, both in regard of their bodies and estates, to the Civil power: That by the Ordinance of God, they are appointed to be

be under, and that in their Government they have nothing to do with the bodies and estates of any Persons, but with their Souls onely. Although here we desire to enquire of you, whether, if you be indeed for the settling of any Government at all in the Church (as you profess to be) you do not think, that all should be subject to it? We cannot judge you to be so irrational, as to be for a Government, and that yet subjection to it must be denied. And if the late Government of the Prelacy was not blamed by you, because it required subjection to it; we wish you to consider, whether upon this account you have reason to censure us. But further, whereas you tell us; *That we garnish our Government with the specious title of Christs Government, Throne and Scepter.* We wish you to consider, what in your Answer to an objection (that you frame out of our Paper) your selves do say. You there tell us. *You pray for the establishment of such Church Government, as is consonant to the will of God, and universall practice of primitive Churches. That Ecclesiastical Discipline may be exercised in the hands of them, to whom it was committed by Christ, and left by him to be transferred from hand to hand to the end of the World.* The expressions, you here use, are as high touching that Government you would have established, as any have been, that ever we have used of ours. For your prayer is, *That Ecclesiastical Discipline may be exercised in the hands of them, to whom it was committed by Christ, and left by him to be transferred from hand to hand to the end of the world.* The Government then, that you are for, must be with you, Christs Government Throne and Scepter. And why do you then condemn us, if we have used such expressions concerning our Government, till you have convinced us, that it is not such? When yet you take to your selves the Liberty to use the like language, concerning the Government you pray may be established.

But whereas you say, Presbytery is the main thing driven at here, and that however she comes ushered in with Godly pretence of sorrow for the sins and the ignorance of the times, and the duty incumbent upon us, to exercise the power that Christ hath committed to us, for edification and not for destruction, and that these are but so many waste Papers, wherein Presbytery is wrapped up

to make it look more handsomely and pass more currantly. We do earnestly desire, That in the examination of your consciences, you would seriously consider, whether you have not both transgressed the rules of Charity in passing such hard censures upon us, and also usurped that, which belongs not to you, in making your selves judges of what falls not under your cognizance. The things you mention belonging only to be tried by your and our Master, to whom we must all stand or fall. *But we are heartily sorry, that Presbytery (which stands in no need of any painting or cover to make it look more handsomely and passe more currantly) should be accounted by you the anguis in herba,* whereof you had need to beware, it having never given that offence to any, as to merit such language.

But now you frame an objection out of our Paper, and return your Answer, professing, *That you pray for the establishment of such Church Government throughout his Highness Dominions, as is consonant to the will of God and universall practice of primitive Churches, &c.* In that you do here joyn the will of God and the universal practise of primitive Churches together, as you joyned the Word of God and the constant practise of the Catholique Church before, you seem to us, to make up the rule (whereby we must judge what Government it is, that you pray might be established) of these two, viz. the will of God and the universal practise of primitive Churches. Or that it is the universal practise of primitive Churches. That must be our sure guide and comment upon the Word of God, to tell us, what is his will revealed these touching Church Government and discipline. If this be your sense (as we apprehend it is) we must needs profess, that herein we greatly differ from you, as not conceiving it to be sound and orthodoxe. It being the Word of God alone, and the approved practise of the Church recorded there (whether it was the universall and constant practise of the Church or no) that is to be the onely rule to judge by in this, or any other controversies in matters of Religion. But yet admitting for the present the rule you seem to make, we should desire to know from you, what that Church Government is, which is so consonant to the will of God and universall practise of primitive Churches. For our own parts, we think it will be very hard

for you, or any others, to demonstrate out of any Records of Antiquity, what was the universall practise of primitive Churches for the whole space of the first 300. years after Christ, or the greatest part thereof (excepting so much as is left upon record in the Scriptures of the new Testament) the Monuments of Antiquity, that concerne those times (for the greatest part of them) being both imperfect, and far from shewing us, what was the universall practise of the Church then (though the practises of some Churches may be mentioned,) and likewise very questionable. At least it will not be easie to assure us, that some of those, that go under the names of the most approved Authors of those times, are neither spurious nor corrupted. And hereupon it will unavoidably follow, that we shall be left very doubtfull, what Government it is, that is most consonant to the universall and constant practise of primitive Churches for that time. But as touching the rule it self, which you seem here to lay down, we cannot close with it. We do much honour and reverence the primitive Churches; But yet we believe we owe more reverence to the Scriptures, then to judge them either imperfect or not to have light enough in themselves, for the resolving all doubts touching matters of faith or practise, except it be first resolved what was either the concurrent interpretation of the Fathers, or the universall and constant practise of the Churches of those times. Besides that admitting this for a rule, that the universall and constant practise of the primitive Churches must be that, which must assure us what is the will of God revealed in Scripture concerning the Government which he hath appointed in the Church, our faith is hereupon resolved into a most uncertain ground, and so made fallible and turned into opinion. For what monuments of Antiquity, besides the Scripture, can assure us touching the matters of fact therein contained, that they were such indeed, as they are there reported to be? the Authors of them themselves being men that were not infallibly guided by the Spirit. But yet supposing we could be infallibly assured (which yet never can be) what was the universall and constant practise of the primitive Churches, how shall that be a rule to assure us, what is most consonant to the will of God? When as we see not,
 especially

especially in such matters, as are not absolutely necessary to
 salvation; but that the universall practise of the Churches
 might in some things be dissonant to the will of God revealed
 in Scriptures. And so the universall practise of primitive
 Churches can be no certain rule to judge by, what Church Go-
 vernment is most consonant to the will of God revealed in his
 Word. We know there are corruptions in the best of men:
 There was such hot contention betwixt *Paul* and *Barnabas*, as Gal. 2.
 caused them to part asunder. *Peter* so failed in his practise; as
 that though before some came from *James*, he did eat with
 the Gentils, yet when they were come he withdrew himself,
 fearing them of the Circumcision. And hereupon not only
 other Jews dissembled with him, but *Barnabas* also was carried
 away with their dissimulation. Whence it's clear, that the ex-
 amples of the best men even in those things, wherein they
 went contrary to the rule of Gods Word, are of a spreading
 nature; and the better the Persons, that give the bad exam-
 ple, are, the greater the danger of the more universall lea-
 vening. Nay we finde, that not only some few Apostolicall
 men had their failings, but even Apostolicall primitive Churches
 did, in the very face of the Apostles, they being yet alive,
 make great defection, both in regard of opinions and practises.
 As from the examples of the Churches of *Corinth*, *Galatia*,
 and the Churches of *Asia* is manifest. The Apostle also tels
 us, that even in his time, the mystery of iniquity began to
 work: And in after times we know, how the Doctrine was
 corrupted: what gross superstition crept into the Church: what
 domination was striven for amongst the Pastors and Bishops of
 the Churches. Till at length Antichrist was got up into his seat,
 unto which height yet he came not all at once, but by steps
 and degrees. Besides it is of fresh remembrance, that notwith-
 standing the reformation happily brought about in our own
 Church in regard of Doctrine and worship, after those dismall
Marian times; yet the corruption, in regard of Government
 continued such, during the time of the late Prelacy (which
 yet was taken away in other reformed Churches) that the Pa-
 stors were deprived of that power of rule, that our Church
 acknowledgeth did belong to them of right; and which did
 G 2 anciently

Even as a Ge-
 nerall Council
 is self is subject
 to error.

anciently belong to them; however the exercise thereof did
 after grow into a long disuse, as hath been shewed before. And
 therefore when we consider on the one hand, that the supe-
 riority, which the Bishop obtained at the first above the Pres-
 byter in the ancient Church (and which was rather obtained
consuetudine Ecclesie then by Divine right) did at the length
 grow to that height, that the Pastors were spoiled of all power
 of rule: so we cannot much wonder on the other hand, that
 the ruling Elder was quite turned out of doors; For the proof
 of the being and exercise of whose office in the purer times,
 there are notwithstanding produced testimonies of the ancients,
 by Divines both at home and abroad, that have written about
 that subject, and to which we do therein refer you: As there
 do remain some footsteps and shadow of their office in the
 Church-wardens and Sides-men even to this day. And so upon
 the whole, the premisses considered, and that we are comman-
 ded not to follow a multitude to do evill (though it were of
 the best of men) and that therefore the examples and practises,
 though it were of whole Churches, are to be no farther a rule
 for us, then they follow Christ; and as their examples be ap-
 proved of in the Word of Christ, notwithstanding the univer-
 sality and long continuedness of such practises. Whereas you
 say, *that you pray for the establishment of such Church Govern-
 ment, as is consonant to the will of God and universall practise of
 primitive Churches*; we believe you might cut the matter a
 great deal shorter, and say, That you are for the establishing
 of that Government, that is most consonant to the will of
 God revealed in the Scriptures, and that the Word of God
 alone (and on which onely Faith must be built, and into which
 at last be resolved, when other records of Antiquity, that yet
 are not so ancient, as it is, have been searcht into never so
 much) shall determine what that is, and so those wearisome
 and endless disputes, about what is the universall and constant
 practise of primitive Churches (and which if it could be found
 out in any good measure of probability for the first 300. years
 after Christ, could never yet be so farr issued, as to be a sure
 bottom, whereon our faith may safely rest) may be cut off.
 It being a most certain rule, and especially in matters of faith,
 that

that the *Factum* is not to prescribe against the *Jus*; The *Præ-*
dictæ against the *Right* or what ought to be done. And it being
 out of all question the safest course for all, to bring all doctrine
 and practices to the sure and infallible Standard and Touch-
 stone, the Word of God alone. And after you have more se-
 riously weighed the matter, and remember how you professe,
 that in the matters you propose in your Paper, *You rest not in*
the Judgment or determination of any general Council of the
Eastern or Western Churches, determining contrary, to what you
are perswaded is so fully warranted in the Word of God, as well as
by the constant practice of the Catholick Church; (although
 what that was, were more likely to be resolved by a general
 Council then by your selves) the proposal of having the Word
 of God alone to be the Judge of the Controversie about Church-
 Government, cannot (wee think) in reason be deny'd by you.

And wee with you shall heartily pray, That the Church-
 Government, which is most consonant to the will of God re-
 vealed in Scriptures, might be established in these Lands. Al-
 though wee must also professe, that wee believe, that that Go-
 vernment, which is established by Authority, and which wee ex-
 ercise, is, for the substantialls of it, this Government, & which wee
 judg also to be most consonant to the practice of the primitive
 Churches in the purest times. And therefore as there was some
 entrance made by the late Parliament, in regard of establishing
 this Government by Ordinances, as the Church-Government of
 these Nations: And as to the putting those Ordinances in exe-
 cution, there hath been some beginning in the Province of Lon-
 don, the Province of this County, and in some other places
 throughout the Land: So when there shall be the opportunity
 offered, wee shall not be wanting by petitioning or otherwayes
 to use our best endeavors, that it may be fully settled through-
 out these Lands. That so wee may not, as to Government in the
 Church, any longer continue as a City without walls, and a
 Vineyard without an hedg, and so (to the undoing of our poste-
 rity) endanger Religion to be quite lost. And upon which con-
 sideration wee do earnestly desire, that all conscientious and mo-
 derate spirited men throughout the Land, though of different
 principles, whether of the Episcopal or Congregational way,
 would

would bend themselves so farr as possibly they can to accommodate with us in point of practice : In which there was so good a progresse made by the late Assembly, as to those that were for the Congregational way : And, as wee think, also all those that were for the lawfulnessse of submission to the Government of the late Prelacy, as it was then exercised : And that are of the Judgment of the late Primate of *Ireland* in his reduction of Episcopacy unto the form of Synodical Government, (mentioned before) might do, if they would come up towards us so farr, as wee judg their principles would allow them : As wee do also professe, that however wee cannot consent to part with the Ruling Elder, unlesse wee should betray the truth of Christ *Rom. 12. 1 Cor. 12. 1 Tim. 5.* (as wee judge,) and dare not give any like consent to admit of a moderate Episcopacy, for fear of encroachments upon the Pastors right, and whereof late sad experience lessons us to beware, as wee judg also, that the superiority of a Bishop above a Presbyter in degree (which some maintain) is no Apostolical institution, and so have the greater reason in that respect to caution against it : Yet wee do here professe, wee should so farr, as will consist with our principles and the peace of our own consciences, be ready to abate or tolerate much for peace sake. That so at the length all parties throughout the Land, that have any soundnesse in them in matters of faith, and that are sober and godly, though of different judgments in lesser matters, being weary of their divisions, might fall in the necks one of another with mutual embraces and kisses, and so at last (through the tender mercy of our God, there might be an happy closure of breaches, and restoring of peace and union in this poor, unsettled, rent, and distracted Church, to the glory of God throughout all the Churches.

But now as to you, and what follows in your Paper, (and in the mean season, till this can be accomplished, and for which wee shall heartily pray) wee cannot but judg, that such as are within our bounds, *and live as lawlesse persons contemning the commands of God, and so out of their rank and order,* (and of which sort you deny not, but that there may be some among us, however they be subject to Law, and the punishment of the Civil Sword, as needs they must be) yet being such as are justly censurable,

reprehensible, according to the rules of our Government, wee do not think they are thereby exempted from being reached by that *Ecclesiastical Sword*, as you phrase it, which both God and the Civil Authority hath intrusted us with.

And as wee are farr from contemning the Authority of the Civil Magistrate, and shall therefore (out of due respect unto it, and that the lawlesse might be curbed) be ready, not onely our selves, as wee have a call; but also warn others, as there may be occasion, to make complaint to the Civil Power, that so such offenders, being punished by corporal and pecuniary mulcts, to the suppression of wickednesse and licentiousnesse, and the *Reformation of mens lives and maners*; Yee wee do not apprehend why this should hinder us from *warning the Members of our severall Congregations to make complaint to the Eldership of those, that walk disorderly and will not be reclaimed, to the end they may be further dealt with, as the nature of their offence may deserve.* Wee being fully assured from the word of truth, That Excommunication is Gods ordinance, appointed for the reformation of the scandalous, and as you your selves acknowledged in the beginning of your Paper: and being a spiritual punishment for the nature and kinde of it, through the blessing of God, may be more available for the destruction of the flesh, and the thorough humiliation of the offender, then any corporal or pecuniary mulct (that reaches but the outward man) can be; And as it was blessed with great successe for this end for many years together, whilest the Church was destitute of Christian Magistrates: Although in a Christian State wee see not, why wee should divide what God hath joyned together. Wee having not yet learned either from the Scriptures or sound reason, that the conjunction of the Civil and Ecclesiastical Sword is not more likely, through the same blessing of God, to work a greater reformation in mens lives, then either of them alone, remembring that old Maxime, *Vis unita fortior.* And as touching our selves, and the power wee are intrusted to exercise, wee shall commit our endeavors unto his blessing, in the use of his own appointed means who is able, and wee doubt not but hee will, make the same effectual for the ends for which hee hath appointed them.

But

But you say, *There are other parts of our Paper, that do likewise remain dark, which you desire to be made plain.* Although wee conceive not so of them, yet wee shall as willingly go along with you, to give you further answer, as you to desire the same of us.

And therefore whereas wee having said in our Paper, *That there are many persons of all sorts, that will not submit themselves to the present Government of the Church.* Your first Quære thereupon is, *Why Government in singulari?* Wee answer, because it is the onely Government, that at present is established in this Church by Civil Authority; The Prelatical being put down, and cautioned against in the humble Advice, in regard of any liberty to be extended to it for the exercise thereof: And there being no other Government but the Presbyterian (which is our Government) that is owned (as the Church-Government for the whole Nation) by the Civil Authority. And as it is that, which wee judg to be most agreeable to the will of God, so also wee conceive, that whatever is of Christs prescribing in any other different Government (whether Episcopal or Congregational) is to be found here: As wee do apprehend the redundancies of them both to be taken away in this, and the defects of them both to be here supplied. And however there may be differences amongst godly men concerning Church-Government, which it is that Christ *in particulari* hath prescribed in his Word, yet wee judg that the Government which Christ hath prescribed in his Word is but one; As all those must say so too, that not being Erastians do hold, That one Church-Government or other is of divine Right.

But whereas you bring in Calvin saying, *Scimus enim unicuique Ecclesia, &c.*

To this wee say; The circumstantial of Government, that are but matters of order onely, and which must be suited to the time, or place, or persons, for whom they are made, and concerning which (if you had quoted the place where Calvin useth these words) wee believe it would appear hee speaks; these being variable, and so but the accidentals of Government, may not be one and the same in all Churches. But if Christ have prescribed a Government in his word; for the substantial of it,

it, it must needs be *de jure* one & the same in every Church. And that the Presbyterian Government is that in particular, which is there prescribed, in *Calvins* judgment, is so manifest by his works to the whole Christian world, that it needs no proof. But if the Government, which Christ hath prescribed, for the substantials of it be onely one, then that alone is good, and all other Governments differing substantially from it must needs be bad; and this onely *jure divino*, and Christs own Government, and the rest nor.

And therefore, whereas in the next place you suppose, *Wee may assert, that our Government, is the Government by way of Eminency, as Christs own Government, more immediately, and jure divino.* To this and to what you further hereupon do inquire, wee say, wee have declared already; That wee call'd it the present Government, because it is the onely Government settled in the Church by the Civil Power. But whether it be the Government by way of Eminency and *jure divino*, that was not the thing referred unto in the phrase wee used. And as to the resolving of your doubts and scruples, wee conceive it is here for us not material to go about the proving of the *Jus divinum* of it; wee having proved, That it is the Government that is established by the Civil Magistrate, and which doth lay as good a foundation to evidence the lawfulness of your submission to it, as for the lawfulness of your submission to the former Government, (and touching which wee suppose you were satisfied) your exceptions lying as much against the High-Commissioners, Chancellors, and Commissaries then, as they can do now against the office of Ruling Elders, and which is the chief thing wee apprehend is stumbled at in our Government.

But yet if you desire to have satisfaction given you touching that which wee are not ashamed to professe, *viz. the Jus divinum* of the Presbyterian Government, wee referr you to what is so fully spoken touching this point, by sundry learned Divines both of our own Church, and the Reformed Churches abroad, that wee know not, what can be added more.

a The Assemblies Propositions about Church-Government. The Jus Divinum by London Ministers. The Provincial

Synod of London their vindication of the Presbyterian Government. Rutherfords due right of Presbyteries. Aarons Rod, by Gillaspie.

And yet wee do not say, That there is no present Government in any Church or Assembly of Saints, but where our Discipline and Government is erected intirely in all the parts of it, no more then wee should deny him to be a man, in whom there were a defect of some integral parts, or in whom there were some superfluous members. But as when Antichristianism so overspread the face of the Church in those dark times before the Reformation, God preserved a Church, Ministry and Ordinances, though not without the mixture of many corruptions in doctrine and worship, even amongst the Papists themselves; So there was some of Christs Government and Discipline in the worst times, though not intirely, nor without the mixture of much corruption in that Discipline and Government. And yet if you consult Antiquity, you will not finde, that the Presbyterian Government hath lyen hid so long, as that for the space of 1500 years it could never be found till this present. You have heard what rule did anciently belong to Presbyters, notwithstanding that through the corruptions, that crept into the Church in after times, the exercise of that power was long disused. And the like may be said of Ruling Elders, and as hath been shewed by others. But it is what *de jure* ought to be, and not what *de facto* is or hath been, which is that, which you and wee are chiefly to attend, and concerning which the Scripture must be the onely Judg, as wee have said before.

But you say, now subjection to our present Government is required by us; and then demand, *Whether all that observe not our rank and order, and subject not themselves to our present Government, must be taken for lawlesse persons? for so, say you, doth this close connexion of ours seem to import; viz. Many who do not subject, but live, &c.*

But here you do reason fallaciously *à bene conjunctis ad male divisa*: For in our Paper wee speak of such, as did live in a sinfull and total neglect of the Lords Supper: That were scandalous and offensive in their lives, drunkards, unclean persons, and that will not subject themselves to the present Government, but live as lawlesse persons. And therefore the lawlesse persons wee meant (and as might plainly have been gathered from our words) were such, who as they subjected not themselves to the present Government

vernment of the Church, so they were also scandalous and offensive in their lives; wee joyning these altogether, whom you divide. And whether such as will neither submit themselves to the Laws of God, nor the Government, that is settled in the Church by the Civil Power, be nor lawlesse persons, we leave it to you to judg.

But yet we do here also minde you, That however we do not judg all those to be lawlesse persons, that do out of conscience not come up to the observation of all those Rules, which are or shall be established by Authority for regulating the outward worship of God, and Government of this Church (being otherwise blamelesse) yet both you and wee may well remember, that such as should have refused to have subjected themselves to the late Prelatical Government, would have been accounted in those times to have been lawlesse persons.

But you say, *When wee make it an Order, that notice shall be taken of all persons, that forsake the publick Assemblies of the Saints, you would gladly know, how farr wee extend this Saintship, this Church, and Assembly of Saints?*

To which wee answer, as farr as the Apostle did, when writing to the Church of *Corinth* and the Churches of *Galatia* hee calls them *Saints* and *Churches*; notwithstanding there were some in those Churches that were leavened with unsound doctrine and grossly erroneous: In *Corinth*, some that denied the Resurrection, made rents and schisms, and sundry grossly scandalous: In the Churches of *Galatia*, such as mixed works with Faith in the point of Justification, and of which the Apostle *Paul* would have those Churches to take notice, even to the censuring of them, they being spots to those Assemblies; and however Saints by profession, and in regard of outward calling, being in Covenant with God, and having been baptizd, yet answered not their profession by suitable conversation. And therefore, however there be sundry of the like stamp in our Assemblies, wee do not therefore unchurch them, or make our Assemblies not the Assemblies of Saints, because of the corruption of such members.

And seeing our principles and practices are manifestly known to be utterly against the opinions and practices of the

Donatists of old, and those that have of late rent themselves from our Churches, because of the scandalousnesse of the corrupt members, that are found in them, (though the sin of these in our Churches is aggravated by giving that occasion) you might well have spared your pains in transcribing out of *Augustine*, what hee justly said unto those schismaticks, that hee had to deal with. Nay, you might rather have gathered from our Paper; That seeing wee said, that notice should be taken of all those that should forsake the publick Assemblies of the Saints, our purpose was to have censured such as the Donatists were; That wee purposed to observe and censure those that did maintain and hold up private meetings in opposition to the publick; That trie down our Churches and publick Assemblies, Ministry and Ordinances, (as you know severall sorts do; and who, as they hold sundry grosse errors, that subvert the faith, so in regard of those and other their practices, that in their own nature do manifestly subvert the order, unity, and peace, that Christ hath established in his Church) do justly fall under Church censure, according to the rules of our Government above mentioned. And that therefore wee were not altogether silent concerning either the sin or punishment of such, as did err grossly in doctrinals or in discipline, so as to make such dangerous rents from the Church, as the fore-named Sectaries do: Contrary to what you say of us in your Paper. And further, by such as forsake the publick Assemblies of the Saints, of whom wee said notice should be taken, you might have gathered our meaning was, that such (of which sort there are but too many amongst us) who out of a principle of carelesnesse, sloth, worldlinesse or manifest prophanenesse, do on the Lords day either idle out the time, or else are worse imployed, when they should resort to the publick Assemblies: and who, as they are no friends to any private meetings for the good of their souls, in the use of any private means of conference or prayer for that end: So they do also Atheistically turn their backs on all the publick Ordinances, forsaking them and the Assemblies, where these are dispensed, should be taken notice of in order to censure, if there was not reformation; and to neither of which sort of persons any indulgence is granted by any Laws of the Land, that wee know

know of. And if you had gathered thus much from our Paper, as your mistake had been far the less, so your Charity had been the more, then to have reckoned us in the number of such Persons, as the *Donatists* were. And yet we did not mean, That we intended to take notice in order unto censure of such, who being sound in the faith, and godly in life (though differing from us in point of Discipline and Government) had their distinct Assemblies from ours, they endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace: They not being censurable by the rules of our Government, as is manifest, by what we have declared before. Although we remember, how all that submitted not to the former Government, were counted schismatical. Neither did we reckon these in the number of the lawless Persons, we speak of, who subjected not themselves to our Government, and whom we account to be parts of the universal visible Church militant here on earth, however they have also their publique Assemblies distinct from ours, though sundry of them, as there is occasion, resort to ours also. But how we should hereupon make either these or the lawless Persons, that we speak of, members of the invisible Triumphant Church (all which we have reckoned to belong to the visible) they must have eyes quicker then Eagles, that can discern how this follows, and therefore there is no fear our Charity should so far over-reach, as you supposed it might.

But still you are unsatisfied; For you know not, it seems, what we mean by the word (*Publique*) the *publique Assemblies of the Saints*. By our professions and practises in our owning the publique Assemblies, and where the publique Ordinances of the Word, Sacraments, and Prayer are dispenced, which we our selves do constantly frequent and stir up others to frequent also, it was plain enough, what we meant by publique Assemblies. And we are heartily sorry, that you understanding our meaning, as is clear by what you say anon, should by this but make your way to give a lash at our *Private meetings*, which are none of them such, as we need to be ashamed of. And which, when we meet, either for conference about matters of Religion, or to pray together, and humble our selves for our own sins and the sins of these times; When there is not the opportunity

portunity of a publique Assembly; or when personal or Family occasions call for a private, is surely as commendable, at the least, as a private meeting upon domestical, civil, or political occasions: and therefore not to be secretly girded at. And on the other hand, we do not meddle with the censuring of those, who being godly and sound in the faith, in the main points of Religion, do yet differ from us in judgement, in matters of Discipline and Government: And have their Assemblies for Gods publique worship distinct from ours, as we are barred from it by the rules of our Government, as we have often said before. And therefore we leave room enough for Consciences that are truly tender. Though we cannot say so much for the Prelatical Government.

Neither do we transgress any Laws of the Land which have made no provision to except any Persons, that we meddle with, and are made censurable by the rules laid down in the form of Church Government, nor have we *under Colour of Authority made any Laws and Edicts*, but according to that power, that the civil Authority hath committed to us, have onely openly given notice in our severall Congregations, of what offences are censurable by the rules of our Government, that the offenders might take heed, they incurre not that censure of Excommunication, which Authority hath awarranted us to inflict upon the obstinate and otherwise incorrigible. And therefore (except to execute what we are appointed to do by the civil power be to condemn it) we cannot be thought to have done any thing in contempt of the civil power, as it is not our ignorance of the Laws in force (that, we are confident, being grounded in reason fight not one against another, and which is your more charitable and favourable construction) that hath led us into any practises, that are transgressions of them. And therefore though you much question (upon what account soever it be, that we have been led into what we have acted) and think it concernes us to look to it, *whether we have not run our selves* into a premunire. Yet we are assured, we are as sufficiently secured against that danger, as all the Justices in the Land are, that have acted upon other Ordinances of Parliament, which they have judged to be in force, as we do also those

to be, that have been the ground of our proceedings.

But you have yet further to except, for whereas we said, *That like notice should be taken of all scandalous Persons.* Your next Quære is, *Whether those, that forsake the publique Assemblies of the Saints in the second order, may not be taken for scandalous Persons comprehended in the third order?*

Here we perceive you understood, who were meant by those, that did forsake the publique Assemblies of the Saints, viz. Those who forsaking the Assemblies, where the publique Ordinances were dispensed, were upon that account really and indeed scandalous, and so being comprehended under the latitude of that expression, might justly merit to be censured as scandalous Persons. And thus conceiving you were not mistaken, yet we, who were to express our selves popularly, and so as we might be understood, considering some of that stamp, though they forsook the publique Assemblies of the Saints, and constantly turned their backs as on the Lords Supper, so on all other Ordinances, yet if not drunkards and swearers, whore-masters, &c. did not take themselves to be scandalous Persons. Do not think, that in this we are any more to be blamed by you (we using variety of expressions onely for this end, that we might be better understood) then we blame Lawyers and Attorneys, and wherein we judge them not to be blame worthy) for using variety of expressions and Multiplicity of *Synonymous* Words to make the matter more clear and out of doubt, where yet one and the same thing is understood by all.

But now hereupon your complaint is; *That we burden you with Traditions in multiplying of orders sine necessitate ad Arthritim usque; and cry out, Quare oneramini ritibus? And tell us of lengthning out our Paper, which yet is not by these few words hereused made very much longer.*

But if you had remembred the multitude of Canons and burthensom Ceremonies, that were rigorously pressed, even to the highest censure in Case of refusall, and under the burthen whereof sundry truly conscientious Persons under the late Prelacy did sigh and groan: When those, that were scandalous enough in their lives, escaped censure (and which some have cause not so soon to forget) we think you would have seen little